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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 004856

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TAGS: PGOV PHUM BM RS  
SUBJECT: RUSSIA WARNS AGAINST ISOLATING BURMESE REGIME

REF: A. STATE 137644

1B. MOSCOW 4774

Classified By: Political M/C Alice Wells for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary: The GOR responded to U.S. calls for the international community to increase pressure on the Burmese regime by cautioning that further isolating the military junta would result in a backlash that could destabilize Burma and Southeast Asia. The MFA continued to downplay the crisis, telling us that recent events have been "over dramatized" and questioning the motives of demonstrators. MFA officials reiterated that the GOR does not believe the unrest in Burma should be addressed by the UNSC and that Russia prefers countries work bilaterally with Burma to encourage its political reform. End summary.

Don't Isolate Burma

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12. (C) During October 2 discussions, MFA Department of ASEAN States and Asia-Pacific Regional Affairs Deputy Director Liudmila Vorobieva responded to U.S. concern over the government crackdown in Burma (ref A), asserting that the media has "over dramatized" the situation. Rejecting our call for sanctions against the Burmese regime and for democratic change, Vorobieva noted that the GOR is concerned the international community will take "drastic and counterproductive" measures to isolate the regime. Doing so could lead the Generals to take repressive, even violent, measures against opposition and ethnic groups. She added that the resulting refugee crisis could destabilize Burma and SE Asia.

Give Political Process a Chance

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13. (C) Vorobieva reiterated that the UNSC is not the appropriate forum for dealing with what is a "strictly internal matter," and that the GOR prefers nations act bilaterally to apply appropriate pressure on Burma to democratize. Russia considers the Burmese Generals' plan for political reform, the "roadmap to democracy," as the best opportunity for achieving long-term stability in Burma. Vorobieva noted that in September a Burmese representative reported to the GOR on recent progress in Burma's National Convention (ref B). She asked that the international community "give Burma's roadmap a chance."

Questions Demonstrators' Motives

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14. (C) Vorobieva continued the GOR practice of questioning the nature of the recent demonstrations by pointing out that what began as protests against fuel price increases was manipulated by dissidents and "outside forces" to promote

their political agenda. She said the fact that the demonstrations took place at the opening of UNGA was "too coincidental," and suggested that protesters provoked clashes with security forces. Vorobieva dismissed reports that thousands of Buddhist monks had participated in the demonstrations by noting the "likelihood" that many opposition activists became monks specifically to participate in the demonstrations.

Burns